

Part I.—GENERAL INFORMATION.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

BAHRAIN is an independent Arab State ruled by His Highness Shaikh Sulman bin Hamed al-Khalifah, K.C.M.G., K.C.I.E. 101
The state consists of an archipelago of small low-lying islands situated about half-way down the Persian Gulf, some 20 miles from the Arab coast and slightly less distant from the Qatar Peninsular. In the past Bahrain owed its importance to its position as the centre of the pearl industry of the Persian Gulf; today it is better known for its oil field and refinery.

"Bahrain" or more correctly "al-Bahrain" means "The Two Seas" 103
and this name, which was formerly applied to the whole coast of Eastern Arabia from Kuwait to Qatar, has long puzzled Arab philologists. Many derivations of the name have been suggested. One is that the two seas are the Persian Gulf and the pool of sweet water below the sands which irrigates the gardens of Qatif and Bahrain. Another, suggested by the writer al-Ashari, is that there was once a great salt lake near Hasa, which was the second of the two seas. A third suggestion is that the name "Bahrain" has some connection with the submarine springs (Ar. singular 'Ain) of fresh water that are found in many places along the coast of Arabia. However a serious objection to this theory is that 'Ain starts with an Arabic letter which is not present in the spelling of "Bahrain." There are other places called Bahrain in Egypt, North Africa and in Persia.

There are five principal islands in the group, whose total area is 131 •
approximately 231 square miles; the largest is Bahrain itself, which is about 30 miles long and from 8 to 10 miles wide. A causeway 1½ miles in length, carrying a motor road, links Manama, capital of the State, which is on the north-east tip of Bahrain island, with the neighbouring town and island of Muharraq. Half-way down the east coast of Bahrain a bridge connects Bahrain with Sitra island. Among the other islands of the group are Nebih Salih, north of Sitra, whose prolific fresh water springs irrigate the date groves which cover the island and which are said to be the best in Bahrain; Jidda, a small rocky islet off the west coast of Bahrain, now used as a penal settlement; and Umm an-Nasaan, a large low-lying island to the south-west of Jidda, which H.H. The Ruler has developed as a breeding place for gazelle and black buck.

Some miles south of Bahrain and very near the coast of Qatar are the 16 islands of the Howar group, the largest of which is 11 miles in

- 131 length and a mile wide. "Howar" means "Young Camel" and the island was so called because it is similar in shape though smaller than Bahrain, and so was described as its offspring.

There are many other little islands in the Bahrain archipelago ; some contain small villages or fishermen's huts while others are deserted except during the occasional visits of migratory birds or pearl divers who come to the islands during the diving season to draw water from the freshwater springs.

- 311 Along the northern coast of Bahrain there is a narrow strip of land
137 some three miles wide which is under cultivation. The fertile gardens containing date and loz (Indian almond or Terminalia) pomegranate, banana and fig trees are irrigated from many natural springs and artesian wells. But in the waterless areas south of the cultivation, in the centre of the island, only sparse and hardy desert flora exists. Although this desert may seem bare to the eyes of a visitor accustomed to the lush greenness of Europe or the States, it is in fact covered with a great variety of desert plants which were found, in a recent survey, to include some 200 species.

- 133 Beyond the cultivated area the land is barren and the landscape consists of low rolling hills with numerous rocky cliffs and dry wadis. Most of the Islands of Bahrain are surfaced with hard limestone rock, covered in many places with sand dunes, and, in the case of the main island, with pre-historic tumuli. From the shore line the topography rises gradually towards the centre where it again drops off into a basin surrounded by steep cliffs. Towards the centre of the basin there is a very pronounced rocky promontory known as "Jebal ad-Dukhan," the "Mountain of Smoke," a name given to it because of the vague and hazy appearance it often presents, particularly during the hot summer months. The Jebal is only 450 feet above sea level and 250 feet above the surrounding plain but often, when mist surrounds its base, it gives the impression of being a considerable mountain.

- 226 Although Bahrain is a small country yet it displays a very varied
228 landscape and many surprising contrasts between old and new. It is primarily a sea faring state. The brilliant blue and green waters, studded with white sails, which surround the islands provide the people of Bahrain with fish, which they catch from boats and in traps, fresh water, from the submarine springs, coral stone for building and pearls which made Bahrain such an important trading centre in the past.
361 The coastal towns have an attractive appearance. Manama's water front is lined with high white houses and beyond the town date gardens extend in an unbroken line down to the water's edge. Roads in the northern part of Bahrain pass through avenues of tall and stately date palms, bearing great bunches of golden, red and yellow fruit during the summer months. The south of the island is a miniature desert and in the foothills around the Jebal there are many little wadis which after the rainy season are bright with desert flowers and shrubs. Even

INTRODUCTION

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131 About midway of the Persian Gulf and some fifteen miles off the coast of Arabia, lie the Bahrein Islands at the mouth of the Gulf of Bahrein, of which the Qatar Peninsula forms the western side. There are five principal islands, only two of which are of real consequence. The largest and by far the most important is variously called Awal, Al Manāmah after the principal city, or more commonly just Bahrein. The last is the modern designation.

103 In ancient times, the name "Bahrein" was applied to a larger area which included the Arabian mainland of Qatar and Hajar and the land situated between Mesopotamia and the Gulf of Oman (the Indian Ocean); this area took in the entire southern coast of the Persian Gulf. This has caused widespread misinterpretation of much of the writings of pre-Islamic and Medieval historians. Throughout this book we shall use the term "Bahrein" in its modern sense to refer to the archipelago of Bahrein proper or to the central island, except where the mainland province is clearly indicated.

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511 Bahrein today has few attractions. There is not much to recommend it as a place of residence, as it is intensely hot for about seven months of the year, and for many of the native inhabitants lacking in comfortable living conditions. For tourists it is rather off the beaten track. Nevertheless, through the centuries these bits of land have been considered well worth fighting for by both European and Asiatic empires.

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312 The reason for Bahrein's unusual and enduring importance can be summed up in two words—pearls and strategy. The pearl fisheries of Bahrein have been known all over the world since the dawn of history and, thanks to an abundance of fresh water springs, the island was a frequent stopping place for ships on the trade routes to India and the Far East.

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175 The Portuguese, the first European power to have an Asiatic colonial empire, fought hard for possession of the islands.

THE BAHREIN ISLANDS

THE NAME

103 "The name of Bahrein, which means 'Two Seas,' is derived, according to the natives of the country, from the existence of two strata of water located there. The higher film is extremely salty, whereas the deeper consists of sweet water with a very pleasant taste." So wrote Masqudi, the famous Arabian author.

Ibn Khallakan has a different explanation. He cites the Persian lexicographer Al-Ashari as follows: "Al-Bāhreīn ('The Two Seas') is so named because in the region where its towns are situated, near the gate of Al-Ahsa and the village of Hajar, there is a lake at ten parsangs distance from the Great Green Ocean [the Persian Gulf]. The lake is three miles long and as many broad. It does not overflow, and its waters are tranquil and salt."

101 According to Al-Jawahari, the author of *Sabab*, the inhabitants are called Bahrani rather than the more usual form Bahri, because "the latter term might be misunderstood, having as it does another meaning, namely 'Belonging to the sea.'"¹

GEOGRAPHY

131 The Bahrain Islands are situated at 26° latitude north and 50° longitude east on the southern side of the Persian Gulf. They are about fifteen miles from the main coast of Saudi

1. Throughout this book, however, we shall use the modern designation "Bahreini" when referring to the people.

- 131 Arabia and somewhat closer to the Qatar Peninsula. Manama, the capital, is at $26^{\circ}13'$ north and $50^{\circ}35'$ east.¹

The archipelago is formed by five principal islands and a number of smaller ones, of which only one is of real importance. It is variously called *Awal*,² Manama after the principal city, or more commonly just *Bahrein*. Curiously shaped in the semblance of a sea horse,³ the island is only twenty miles long and ten miles across at the widest point.

- 312 *Bahrein* would be totally uninhabitable if it were not for an abundance of fresh water (believed to come through channels under the sea bottom from somewhere in Arabia, probably the *Tuwaik* mountains) which supplies about two hundred springs and many artesian wells. It is likely that some of these springs were formerly under the sea, since the islands are surrounded by coral formations and in such places the sea always tends to become shallower and dry land to increase. In the northern part of the principal island the water is plentiful enough to produce luxuriant gardens and palm groves, and on the other islands irrigation farming is carried on extensively.

Fresh water springs are also found on the shallow ocean bottom. In former times the natives dived into the sea to collect drinking water in collapsed goatskins. Some water sellers used more scientific methods, however, sinking bamboo tubes to the level of the springs, then collecting the water as it rose above sea level.

GEOLOGY

- 133 *Bahrein* lies on a portion of the ancient Tethys geosynclinal belt represented today by the Persian Gulf. The formation of the principal island is the result of pressure from the mountainous masses of Persia against the crystalline platform of central Asia, the thrust being absorbed by a gentle folding in the

1. The British Political Agency is at lat. $26^{\circ}14'09.95''$ N. and long. $50^{\circ}35'00.39''$ E.

2. The etymology of the word *Awal* is "fish" or "whale."

3. See map, back of book.

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protests against this concession and considers itself at liberty to claim and demand the restitution of any profit that may accrue from such concessions, as well as compensation for any damage that may result therefrom. . . .

In view of the fact that Iran's claim to sovereignty over Bahrain had been reiterated in the past on several occasions, it is likely that such a claim might be put forth again under favorable circumstances. After the second World War the issue was revived by Prime Minister Qawam as-Sultanah in 1946. He announced that all oil produced in Bahrain and shipped to the Iranian mainland would be taxed at the same rate as that produced by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. If Iran's claim to the sovereignty of Bahrain is valid, the Oil Nationalization Act, unless it specifically excludes Bahrain or unless the Act by its terms applies only to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, must *ipso jure* apply to the Bahrain Petroleum Company. While such claims have often been disregarded, they might assume a certain seriousness should the *Tudeh* Party seize power and, supported or inspired by Russia, seek excuses for intervention in the Persian Gulf by raising the question of Iran's claim to sovereignty over Bahrain.

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Before turning to a discussion of the validity of Iran's claim, a word on the geography of the Bahrain Islands might be useful. The term "Bahrain" (which means the "two seas") was originally applied to the continental coast of Arabia (al-Hasa), the peninsula of Qatar, and the group of islands which separate the bay between Hasa and Qatar into the "two seas." But this term came to be applied only to those islands which form the "two seas." The Bahrain Islands are an archipelago of coral formation (except perhaps the rocky hills in the center of the largest island) which includes Bahrain, the largest (it is 27 miles long by 10 wide), Muharraq (second in size, five miles in length, and situated to the north of Bahrain), Sitrah, Umm Na'san and a number of smaller islands. This archipelago was famous for its pearl fisheries from antiquity and more recently for the oil resources which have been discovered since the first World War. Its strategic value may assume an increasing importance should Communism penetrate southward towards Iran, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf.*

* The British Government had already objected to the grant of oil concessions to other Powers, but the United States State Department, pressing for equal opportunities for American interests, secured British agreement to the participation of American interests in the oil of Bahrain. For an exchange of notes on this matter see *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1929, Vol. III* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1944), pp. 80-82.

* For the geography of the Bahrain Islands, see J. Theodore Bent, "The Bahrain Islands in the Persian Gulf," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, Vol. XII (January, 1890), pp. 1-19; Captain A. W. Stiffe, "Ancient Trading Centers of the Persian Gulf, VII: Bahrain," *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. XVIII (September, 1901), pp. 291-294; Maynard Owen Williams, "Bahrain: Port of Pearls and Petroleum," *The*

[For the rest of the footnote see p. 633]

Bahrain M22
Kuwait M11
Saudi Arabia M11

K 128

ARABIA

SA companies may need to be defined now that one concessionaire
471 seems likely to create revenue; problems may also arise if, as a
648 result of oil developments, it is planted with a population that
will need to be endowed with public services and, no doubt,
with a system of taxation.

BAHRAIN

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131 The Bahrain Archipelago is a group of islands in the Gulf of
Bahrain, which is bounded on the east by the Qatar Peninsula
and on the west by the mainland coast of al-Hasa. Its total area
is 213 square miles. The principal island—Bahrain itself—is
B about thirty miles long and ten miles wide. It is low-lying and its
312 northern end is well watered by fresh water springs and pro-
241 duces good date crops. Citrus fruit and lucerne are also grown.
135 The oilfields lie round the rocky cluster of hills known as Jebel
Dukhan (Hill of Smoke), which is in the barren centre of the
B island.

491 To the north-east of Bahrain Island, and joined to it by a
504 causeway and motor road, is the low, sandy island of Muharraq,
and between the two islands is a good deep-water harbour
[712] (Khor Kaliya). It is used as a small British naval base; an
American admiral also flies his flag there. Nearby there is a
B second, but shallow harbour (Bahrain harbour), which faces
508 north and is usefully equipped. The natural aerodrome on
509 Muharraq Island has been developed into the largest com-
mercial airfield in the Persian Gulf and now serves the airliners
B of all nations. It is also used by the RAF, and the whine of jet
133 aircraft is a commonplace. The south end of the island of
132 Bahrain is low-lying and sandy. The climate, though oppressive
in summer owing to the prevalent heat and damp of the western
B shores of the Persian Gulf, is more humid and less windy than
161 that of Kuwait. The population of the Archipelago was 109,650
when a census was taken in 1950.¹

B The capital and the seat of government is the port of Mana-
361 ma.² It is generally referred to as Bahrain, and is situated
161 between the two harbours. It has a population of 39,648, which
162 includes many rich Arab, Persian, and Indian merchants, as
well as some 300 Europeans and Americans. The second town,
Muharraq, on Muharraq Island, has a population of 24,566
which is purely Arab.

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361 The British Political Agency is in Manama town, which also
boasts an electricity station, a wireless station, post offices,
hospitals, clubs, public gardens, and up-to-date schools. The
town is well supplied with good motor roads, and there are

¹ 1952 estimate, 115,000.² Population: 1950, 39,648; 1952 (estimate), 45,000.

Bahrain

GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

- 619
131 Bahrain is an independent sheikhdom, comprising a small group of islands at the entrance to the Gulf of Bahrain, between the Hasa coast of Saudi Arabia and the peninsula of Qatar. Famous since ancient times as the center of the Persian Gulf pearling industry, the islands have attained new prominence within recent years as a link in the chain of oil fields stretching from Qatar to central Iraq. The Sheikhdom has had protective treaty relations with Great Britain since 1880, and the headquarters of the British Political Resident for the Persian Gulf area are established on Bahrain Island.
- 648
131 The archipelago consists of 3 main islands, besides several small islets, which have an aggregate area of about 210 to 225 square miles. Bahrain, the principal island, is approximately 27 miles in length and 10 miles in width. A narrow belt of luxuriant date gardens, supported by abundant fresh-water springs and wells, rims the northern end of the island, but the remainder is mostly barren desert. Rocky hills rise to an elevation of about 450 feet along the central ridge, Jabal ad Dukhan, while sandy wastes, broken by salt marshes, stretch toward the south.
- 131 Muharraq, a horseshoe-shaped sandy island, with an area of 5 to 6 square miles, is second in size and in importance. It lies northeast of Bahrain, and is separated from [491] the larger island by a narrow channel which is bridged by a 2-mile causeway, constructed in 1941. Chief among the other inhabited islands are Sitra and Nabbi Sâlih, offshore to the east, and Umm Na'san, to the west.

164 occurred intermittently in the past, chiefly in Manama and Muharraq. The islands are exposed to the introduction of the disease from neighboring territories, but the enforcement of quarantine regulations has prevented its establishment for several decades.

Other Infections. Although a mild degree of louse infestation occurs among the inhabitants in some congested areas, louse-borne typhus is rarely, if ever, reported. Imported cases of cutaneous leishmaniasis, or Oriental sore, and filariasis are occasionally treated in the local medical institutions, but the insect vectors are not known to be present, and indigenous infections have not been recorded. Guinea worm infection is sometimes seen among persons from Iran, but it is not found in the resident population.

NUTRITIONAL DISEASES

46 The standards of nutrition have improved materially in the last few years. Under-nutrition is common, but serious defects are seen primarily among the inhabitants of outlying villages and the families of workers from the mainland. Poverty, traditional dietary customs and intestinal parasitism are contributory factors. Subclinical deficiencies in vitamin C are widespread, and scurvy is observed from time to time. Rickets is frequent among the children in the towns. Anemia is prevalent, and hemoglobin levels of 25 to 30 per cent are not unusual among the women.

SUMMARY

619 Bahrain is an independent sheikhdom
 131 which consists of an archipelago of 5 main
 282 islands situated in the Persian Gulf near the
 315 coast of Arabia. It has long been famous as a pearl fishing center, and, since 1932, has enjoyed prosperity as an oil-producing area.
 161 It has a heterogeneous population which
 162 numbered 109,650 in 1950, including 18,471
 175 foreigners. The people are predominantly of mixed Arab and Persian origin, and about
 100 96 per cent are Moslems.

DISTRICTS

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Turks had previously established a small garrison, which was withdrawn in 1910. The ownership of the island of *Qrān*, about 36 miles NE. by E. of Ras el-Bidya, is undetermined. It has an anchorage on the S. side, and is frequented by fishermen from Bahrein, Musallamiyah, and Jinnah, who dry fish and make turtle oil.

C. BAHREIN

AREA

The present Sheikhdum of Bahrein consists of the archipelago formed by the islands of *Bahrein*, *Muharraq*, *Umm Na'asān*, *Sitrah*, and *Nebi Sālih*, with a number of lesser islets and rocks. The whole forms a compact group almost in the middle of the gulf which separates the promontory of El-Qatar and the coast of Qatīr; the Sheikhs of Bahrein have had relations of a political nature with El-Qatar (see p. 328).

The principal island has an extreme length of 30 miles from N. to S. and a maximum breadth of 10 miles. *Muharraq*, which lies NE., and is separated from Bahrein by a strait $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles broad, has a maximum diameter of $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles, but owing to its horse-shoe form contains little territory. *Umm Na'asān*, which is less than 4 miles by $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, lies 3 miles off the W. coast of the main island. *Sitrah*, separated from the E. coast by a narrow channel, has a length of $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles from N. to S., and a maximum breadth of $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. *Nebi Sālih*, commonly called *Jezirah*, lying in the inlet of Kabb on the E. coast of Bahrein, NW. of *Sitrah*, has a diameter of only $\frac{1}{2}$ mile.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Bahrein Island is mostly flat and low, but rises gradually to an interior plateau 100 to 200 ft. high, in the middle of which is an oval depression about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles long from N. to S. by about 4 miles broad, containing the solitary hill *Jebel Dukhān*, about 440 ft. in height. The descent inwards from the plateau to the depression is in most places too steep to be practicable for animals; at the N. end there is a nearly vertical drop of 20 ft., followed by a slope of 30 ft. The plateau is extremely stony, presenting on the N. side a low cliff-line of about 15 ft., with a sandy plain below it, extending in all directions to the coast, and draining from W. to E. On the same side of the plateau is a great field of ancient tumuli covering about 12 square miles, called by the Arabs *Murāqib*. A large inlet, *Khōr*

361 Qasabiyah clear of the town, at the customs pier, and at the jetty
438 of the British Agency.

2. *Budeyya'*, near the NW. corner of Bahrein Island, stretches for about a mile along the sea with a depth of about 300 yards. It has three quarters with about 8,000 inhabitants, *Fariq el-'Amāmarah*, *Fariq ed-Dām*, and *Fariq el-Budayya'*, containing a considerable number of stone houses, five or six buildings of solid masonry with upper storeys, and a tower. The people are all Sunnis, the most numerous Arab communities belonging to the Dawāsir (800 houses) and 'Amāmarah (100 houses). There are a large number of negro slaves (450 houses) and free negroes (200 houses), with about 50 households of *Hūwalah*. Most of the people are engaged in the pearl-fisheries, and more than 100 boats are owned. The Dawāsir, whose Sheikh administers the town without interference from the Sheikh of Bahrein, chiefly occupy the Budayya' and Dām quarters, obtaining their water-supply from wells in the date-plantations of *Dirāz* and *Beni Jamrah* villages; the well of the 'Amāmarah quarter is a little to the E. of the houses.

2. *Muharraq*

101 This island lies immediately NE. of Bahrein, from which it is
•131 separated by a narrow strait a mile and a half broad; it is of horse-shoe shape, with the open side to the S.; the maximum diameter is about 4 miles. The island is really a low sandbank surrounded by flat coral reefs which almost triple its surface at low tide; from this projects on the NW. a rocky spit called *Ras el-Khaseifah*, extending seaward for nearly 4 miles and constituting the chief danger to ships entering Manāmah harbour. Several marine springs rise near the coasts of the island. There are some 15 villages or hamlets in addition to Muharraq town, the more important of which are: 'Arād, on a promontory on the S. coast; 100 huts of *Bahārinah* date-growers, fishermen, and pearl-divers. There is a rectangular ruined fort, with sides about 90 ft. long, at the E. point of 'Arād Bay. Plantations with about 12,000 date-palms. *Buseifin*, on the W. coast, 1 mile N. of Muharraq town; 400 houses, some of stone, but most of date-mats. The people are Sunnis, chiefly of the Madhāhakah tribe, owning about 50 boats, mostly used for pearl-fishing. Date-palms number about 1,000; carrots and lucerne are cultivated beneath the trees. Two wells in the date-grove, with brackish water. *Deir*, on NW. coast, 2 miles N. by E. of Muharraq town; 300 houses of mud or date-mats; 3 mosques. Inhabitants are *Bahārinah* engaged in the